

Labor Management

Tips and Training

Labor Management

For farm employers, labor management requires planning, organizing and directing anyone who works on the farm. Succeeding with labor management first involves understanding work needs and allocating the appropriate personnel. If farms see a work need that existing staff are unable to address, then several practices can help with identifying suitable candidates and choosing who to hire. Examples include collecting applications, hosting interviews and conducting background checks.

Labor management also extends to equipping workers with what they need — examples include a positive work environment, training, mentoring and performance feedback — to do their jobs well. It also includes recognizing when a labor arrangement doesn't work and taking steps to resolve the problem or terminate the relationship.

Why Labor Management Is Key

Hiring labor can be a major cash outlay for a farm. Therefore, employees who fail to work productively may stress a farm's available resources. Improving labor efficiency and decision-making may enable farms to enhance their financial performance.

Steps To Improving Labor Management

The following steps are examples of practices you can take to improve labor management on your farm.

- Foster good communication among owners, managers and employees.
- Clearly state farm rules and expectations to all employees.
- Facilitate development of employee skills and abilities.
- Research pay rates and benefits offered by other local employers, so you can develop compensation packages that attract and retain quality workers.
- Formalize a human resources program that includes developing job descriptions, adopting sound hiring practices, onboarding new workers, training all workers, conducting regular performance reviews, designing competitive compensation plans and enforcing disciplinary actions as needed.
- Determine whether to form employment contracts with workers.
- Reward employees for good performance.
- Give employees decision-making opportunities, so they feel valued and trusted.
- Analyze and appreciate the cost of custom-hiring for certain tasks versus using your own labor force.
- Focus on improving your personnel management skills.

- Develop practices or systems to promote labor efficiency.
- Create a sense of ownership in the business by encouraging participation in farm planning and empowering employees to share ideas.
- Comply with all state and federal requirements on issues such as hiring, wages, benefits, overtime, taxes and recordkeeping.

Additional Resources

You can find more information about labor management within these resources.

- [Developing and Implementing Sound Hiring Practices](#) (Purdue Extension)
- [Employee Handbooks](#) (Cornell University)
- [Employee Labor & Management](#) (Iowa State University Extension and Outreach)
- [Job Description Writer](#) (U.S. Department of Labor)
- [Labor](#) (The National Agricultural Law Center)
- [Making Labor Management Work for Your Farm](#) (University of Missouri)
- [Missouri Farm Labor Guide](#) (University of Missouri)
- [Farm Labor Survey](#) (USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service)
- [Onboarding Farm Employees](#) (Cornell University)
- [Performance Management](#) (Cornell University)
- [The Farm Labor Dashboard](#) (University of Vermont Extension)